AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A component mounting system comprising:

a) a ball to be fixed to a component to be aligned, the ball and component together forming a ball-and-component assembly;

b) a socket into which the ball is placed; and

c) a collar ~~which is adapted~~ to be mounted to the socket, whereby the socket and collar capture the ball between them, the collar ~~having an opening and also~~ having ~~at least three~~ springs ~~located symmetrically about the opening which contact~~ welded to the ball ~~such that the ball may pivot but is relatively fixed translationally~~.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) The component mounting system of claim 1 wherein the socket comprises raised features about the socket's interior ~~inner perimeter~~ whereby the ball can be pivoted when captured between the collar and the socket.

4. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 3 wherein the raised features are ball bearings mounted into the socket.

5. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 3 wherein the raised features are raised surfaces of the socket.

6. (Previously amended) The component mounting system of claim 3 wherein the raised features are symmetrically located about the socket.

7. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 6 wherein the raised features are stainless steel.

8. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 6 wherein the raised features are

brass.

9. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 6 wherein the raised features are tetrafluoroethylene.

10. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 1 wherein the component to be mounted is an optical component.

11. (Previously amended) The component mounting system of claim 1 wherein the socket has a circular opening into which the ball-and-component assembly is placed.

12. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 1 wherein the socket, collar, and ball are formed of the same material.

13. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 1 wherein the socket, collar, and ball are formed of stainless steel.

14. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 1 wherein the component to be mounted is selected from the group consisting of collimators, lasers, lenses, and spatial light modulators.

15. (Original) The component mounting system of claim 1 wherein the springs are shaped like fins which protrude from the collar.

16. (Currently amended) A component mounting system comprising:

a) a ball to be fixed to a component to be aligned, the ball and component together forming a ball-and-component assembly;

b) a socket ~~having a circular opening~~ into which the ball may be placed, the socket comprising ball bearings about the socket's interior in contact with the ball ~~raised features located symmetrically about the inner circumference of its circular~~

~~opening~~; and

c) a collar to be mounted to the socket, the collar ~~also having a circular opening therein,~~ whereby the socket and collar capture the ball ~~within their respective circular openings~~, the collar also having springs that are located ~~generally symmetrically~~ about the ~~circular~~ opening wherein the springs are adapted to make contact with the ball~~, whereby the ball may be pivotally aligned when captured by the socket and collar but is relatively fixed translationally~~.

17. (Currently amended) The component mounting system of claim 16 wherein the springs are shaped like fins which protrude from the collar.

18. (Previously amended) A method for aligning an optical component, the method comprising:

a) affixing the optical component to a ball;

b) placing the ball into a socket;

c) fastening a collar having an opening to the socket, capturing the ball within the collar/socket assembly, the collar having at least three springs that are mechanically biased symmetrically around and against the ball;

d) pivoting the ball into position; and

e) affixing the springs to the ball, thereby fixing the pivotal alignment of the ball relative to the collar/socket assembly.

19. (Previously amended) The method of claim 18 wherein a beam of light exits from the optical component in a direction fixed by the pivotal alignment of the optical component and further comprising:

a) placing an optical sensor at a spot terminating a path from the optical component;

b) measuring the intensity of the optical signal received at the optical sensor;

c) continuing the pivoting of the ball-and-component assembly until the intensity of the received optical signal is generally at a maximum.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein the affixing of the springs to the ball is accomplished by welding.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 wherein the welding is laser welding.

22. (New) The component mounting system of claim 16 wherein the springs are welded to the ball.

23. (Canceled)

24. (New) The component mounting system of claim 16 wherein the socket comprises stainless steel raised features in contact with the ball.

25. (New) The component mounting system of claim 16 wherein the socket comprises brass raised features in contact with the ball.

26. (New) The component mounting system of claim 16 wherein the socket comprises tetrafluoroethylene raised features in contact with the ball.

27. (New) The component mounting system of claim 16 wherein the socket, collar, and ball are formed of stainless steel.

28. (New) The component mounting system of claim 16 wherein the component to be mounted is selected from the group consisting of collimators, lasers, lenses, and spatial light modulators.